

Activities for Elementary School Students

Follow the Flight

Using a map of the Western hemisphere, have students trace the general route that a specific bird species might follow while migrating from Vermont to Costa Rica. Talk to the students about the different seasons and have them identify where the birds might be in each season.

Extensions: Discuss with the students the differences between Vermont and Costa Rica. How does the habitat differ? How does the food that the birds eat differ?

A Changing View

Hang a bird feeder outside the classroom window. Each morning have one student record the species they see come to the feeder in a 10-minute time period. Students may need a field guide with photographs to help identify the species. Have the student also note the weather, temperature, date and time. At the end of each month have a discussion with the class about what types of birds were seen at the feeder that month and how that might change with the seasons.

Notes: Try to hang a decal on the window so birds don't hit the glass. Hang the feeder a couple weeks before you plan to begin this activity so birds find the food. Have the students record data in the morning. This is the best time to see birds at the feeder.

Extensions: If you don't want to record data every day, try once a week, or make up your own intervals. Hanging more than one feeder may increase the number of birds that come to the window.

Migration Simulation (*Hands on Nature*, Vermont Institute of Natural Science, 1986)

Find a large area where the students can run and make noise. Mark a starting line and label it as "north" and a finishing line with a label of "south." Have students brainstorm a list of obstacles that could hinder a bird's migration. These may include, but are not limited to, weather elements (fog, wind, rain), skyscrapers, buildings, lack of food, and lack of trees. Then create signs for students to hang around their necks with one obstacle written on each sign. About a fourth of the students hang a sign around their necks and represent the obstacle they are given. These students scatter between the start and finish. The remaining three fourths of the group represent birds. On "go" the birds must try to make it south to the finishing line without getting tagged by an obstacle. The obstacles must keep their left foot planted in the same place at all times. If a bird is tagged, they must stop where they are and sit down. They have "died" and cannot make it the rest of the way south. After the first round, talk to the students about which obstacles are human-made. For the next round, remove these obstacles and see how many birds make it all the way south. Compare the results of the two rounds with the students and discuss the impacts humans have on bird migration.

The Importance of Forested Land

In a large outdoor area, place "hot mats" in three paths. Explain to the students that these "hot mats" represent forested land and that each path represents a migration

route. Students must follow the path by only stepping on the mats. In the first stretch, place the hot mats very close together. In the second stretch, place them farther apart, so it is noticeably difficult to get from one mat to another. On the third stretch, place one mat at the start, and one mat at the finish. Allow students to attempt every path. Then, explain to students that forested land provides the migrating bird species with food and shelter. Point out the ease to which students were able to cross the first stretch, and the difficulty of crossing the third stretch. Explain to students that land in tropical countries like Costa Rica, as well as across all migration routes, needs to stay forested so bird species have access to food and shelter while migrating.